

Claims

1. A bingo game apparatus, comprising:
 - a plurality of player stations, each player station being operable by a respective player to place a wager on a turn of a game of bingo;
 - a random event generator activatable to generate a number of random events upon which an outcome of the game of bingo is based, the outcome being either an unfavourable outcome in which the player forfeits the wager, and at least one favourable outcome in which the player wins a corresponding prize; and
 - display means associated with each respective player station, the display means being instructable by the player station to the respective player:
 - a) a simulation of the turn of the game of bingo;
 - b) a simulation of a turn of an entertainment game having an outcome that is unfavourable when the outcome of the turn of the game of bingo is an unfavourable outcome, and a favourable outcome when the outcome of the game of bingo is a favourable outcome, causing the player to win the same corresponding prize as the game of bingo; and
 - c) a simulation of a turn of a multistage bonus game, the simulation of the multistage bonus game being randomly activatable whenever the entertainment game has a favourable outcome to cause the player to win the same corresponding prize as the entertainment game.
2. A bingo game apparatus as claimed in claim 1 in which the turn of the multistage bonus game terminates after a randomly selectable number of sequential stages of the bonus game.
3. A bingo game apparatus as claimed in claim 2 in which the prize winnable by the player during a turn of the multistage bonus game is won at a final stage of the randomly selected number of sequential stages of the bonus game.

4. A bingo game apparatus as claimed in claim 2 in which the prize winnable by the player during a turn of the multistage bonus game is a sum of sub-prizes winnable by the player at each one of the randomly selectable number of sequential stages of the bonus game.
5. A bingo game apparatus as claimed in claim 1 in which the display means displays only one of the simulations of the entertainment game and the multistage bonus game at any instant.
10. 6. A bingo game apparatus as claimed in claim 1 in which the display means includes a primary display means and a secondary display means, the secondary display means displaying the simulation of the turn of the game of bingo, and the primary display means displaying the simulations of the entertainment game and the multistage bonus game.
15. 7. A bingo game apparatus as claimed in claim 1 in which the random event generator is executable in a gaming server remote from the plurality of player stations, the gaming server being communicable with each one of the plurality of remote player stations by means of a communication network.
20. 8. A bingo game apparatus as claimed in claim 1 in which the entertainment game is a game of video slots.
25. 9. A bingo game apparatus as claimed in claim 1 in which the game of bingo has 75 uniquely numbered balls and a random event generated by the random event generator corresponds to the drawing at random of one of the 75 uniquely numbered balls.
30. 10. A bingo game apparatus as claimed in claim 9 in which a player bingo card associated with the game of bingo has 25 positions thereon arranged

in a 5 by 5 grid, each grid position being numbered with a respective random number from 1 to 75.

11. A bingo game apparatus as claimed in claim 10 in which one favourable outcome of the game of bingo corresponds to a game-ending pattern causing the turn of the game of bingo to terminate, the game-ending pattern arising when all the numbers on at least one player bingo card match the numbers drawn by the random event generator.

10 12. A bingo game apparatus as claimed in claim 11 in which the game of bingo has a plurality of further favourable outcomes, each one of the plurality of further favourable outcomes arising when all the numbers in a predetermined pattern on at least one player bingo card match the numbers drawn by the random event generator.

15 13. A bingo game apparatus as claimed in claim 9 in which the random event generator draws at random a first set of 24 of the 75 balls and transmits data corresponding to the first set of 24 balls to each one of the player stations.

20 14. A bingo game apparatus as claimed in claim 13 in which each one of the player stations activates a prize claiming means operable by the player to claim any favourable outcome arising from the first set of 24 balls.

25 15. A bingo game apparatus as claimed in claim 14 in which the prize claiming means is any one of a pushbutton on the player terminal or an activatable icon on the display means.

30 16. A bingo game apparatus as claimed in claim 15 in which the prize claiming means is operable by a player for a predetermined period of time.

17. A bingo game apparatus as claimed in claim 13 in which the random event generator draws at random further balls one at a time, and in which the gaming server checks for the occurrence of a game ending pattern on any of the player bingo cards after the drawing of each ball.

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18. A bingo game apparatus as claimed in claim 17 in which the gaming server transmits data corresponding to all the drawn balls necessary for the occurrence of the game ending pattern to each one of the player stations if the game ending pattern is not the last possible game ending pattern in the turn of the game of bingo.

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19. A bingo game apparatus as claimed in claim 18 in which each one of the player stations activates the prize claiming means operable by a player to claim a favourable outcome arising from the occurrence of the game ending pattern, the prize claiming means being operable by a player for a predetermined period of time.

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20. A bingo game apparatus as claimed in claim 19 in which the gaming server terminates the turn of the game of bingo if a player claims the favourable outcome within the predetermined period of time.

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21. A bingo game apparatus as claimed in claim 17 in which the random event generator draws all the remaining balls if the game-ending pattern is the last possible game-ending pattern in the turn of the game of bingo, and the gaming server transmits data corresponding to all the drawn balls necessary for the occurrence of the last game ending pattern and the remaining balls to each one of the player stations.

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22. A bingo game apparatus as claimed in claim 21 in which each one of the player stations activates the prize claiming means operable by a player to claim a favourable outcome arising from the occurrence of the last

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possible game-ending pattern, and in which the gaming server terminates the turn of the game of bingo if a player claims the favourable outcome.

23. A bingo game apparatus as claimed in claim 22 in which the prize claiming means remains activated until a player claims the favourable outcome.

5 24. A method of operation of a bingo game apparatus, comprising the steps of:

10 enabling each one of a plurality of player stations for operation by a respective player to place a wager on a turn of a game of bingo;

15 activating a random event generator to generate a number of random events upon which an outcome of the game of bingo is based, the outcome being either an unfavourable outcome in which the player forfeits the wager, and at least one favourable outcome in which the player wins a corresponding prize;

20 displaying to the respective player on a display means:

a) a simulation of the turn of the game of bingo;

25 b) a simulation of a turn of an entertainment game having an outcome that is unfavourable when the outcome of the turn of the game of bingo is an unfavourable outcome, and a favourable outcome when the outcome of the game of bingo is a favourable outcome, causing the player to win the same corresponding prize as the game of bingo; and

25 c) a simulation of a turn of a multistage bonus game, the simulation of the multistage bonus game being randomly activated whenever the entertainment game has a favourable outcome to cause the player to win the same corresponding prize as the entertainment game.

30 25. A method as claimed in claim 24 that includes a step of terminating the turn of the multistage bonus game after a randomly selected number of sequential stages of the bonus game.

26.A method as claimed in claim 25 in which the prize winnable by the player during a turn of the multistage bonus game is awarded at a final stage of the randomly selected number of sequential stages of the bonus game.

5 27.A method as claimed in claim 25 in which the prize winnable by the player during a turn of the multistage bonus game is awarded as a sum of sub-prizes winnable by the player at each one of the randomly selected number of sequential stages of the bonus game.

10 28.A method as claimed in claim 24 in which only one of the simulations of the entertainment game and the multistage bonus game is displayed at any instant.

15 29.A method as claimed in claim 24 in which the simulation of the turn of the game of bingo is displayed on a secondary display means, and the simulations of the entertainment game and the multistage bonus game are displayed on a primary display means.

20 30.A method as claimed in claim 24 in which the random event generator is executed in a gaming server remote from the plurality of player stations, and communication is provided between the gaming server and each one of the plurality of remote player stations by means of a communication network.

25 31.A method as claimed in claim 24 in which the game of bingo is established with 75 uniquely numbered balls, and a random event generated by the random event generator is configured to correspond to the drawing at random of one of the 75 uniquely numbered balls.

30 32.A method as claimed in claim 31 which includes a step of establishing a player bingo card associated with the game of bingo to have 25 positions

thereon arranged in a 5 by 5 grid, each grid position being numbered with a respective random number from 1 to 75.

33. A method as claimed in claim 32 in which one favourable outcome of the game of bingo is established to correspond to a game-ending pattern causing the turn of the game of bingo to terminate and the game-ending pattern is determined to arise when all the numbers on at least one player bingo card match the numbers drawn by the random event generator.

10 34. A method as claimed in claim 33 in which the game of bingo is established to have a plurality of further favourable outcomes, and for determining each one of the plurality of further favourable outcomes to arise when all the numbers in a predetermined pattern on at least one bingo card match the numbers drawn by the random event generator.

15 35. A method as claimed in claim 31 in which a first set of 24 of the 75 balls is drawn at random and data corresponding to the first set of 24 balls is transmitted to each one of the player stations.

20 36. A method as claimed in claim 35 in which a prize claiming means is activated on each one of the player stations, the prize claiming means operable by the player for a predetermined period of time to claim any favourable outcome arising from the first set of 24 balls.

25 37. A method as claimed in claim 35 that includes the steps of drawing at random further balls, one at a time, and checking for the occurrence of a game-ending pattern on any of the player bingo cards after the drawing of each ball.

30 38. A method as claimed in claim 37 in which data corresponding to all the drawn balls necessary for the occurrence of the game-ending pattern is

transmitted to each one of the player stations if the game-ending pattern is not the last possible game-ending pattern in the turn of the game of bingo.

39. A method as claimed in claim 38 that includes a step of activating the prize claiming means on each one of the player stations for a predetermined period of time, the prize claiming means being operable by a player to claim a favourable outcome arising from the occurrence of the game-ending pattern.

10 40. A method as claimed in claim 39 in which the turn of the game of bingo is terminated if a player claims the favourable outcome within the predetermined period of time.

15 41. A method as claimed in claim 37 in which all the remaining balls are drawn if the game-ending pattern is the last possible game-ending pattern in the turn of the game of bingo, and data corresponding to all the drawn balls necessary for the occurrence of the last game ending pattern and the remaining balls is transmitted to each one of the player stations.

20 42. A method as claimed in claim 41 which includes the further steps of activating a prize claiming means on each one of the player stations, the prize claiming means being operable by a player to claim a favourable outcome arising from the occurrence of the last possible game-ending pattern, and terminating the turn of the game of bingo if a player claims the favourable outcome.

25 43. A method as claimed in claim 42 in which the prize claiming means is activated until a player claims the favourable outcome.